

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Senior Management Team

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2017

Present

Andrew Dillon	Chief Executive
Mark Baker	Director – Centre for Guidelines
Ben Bennett	Director – Business Planning and Resources
Jane Gizbert	Director – Communications
Gill Leng	Director – Health and Social Care
Alexia Tonnel	Director – Evidence Resources

In attendance

David Coombs	Associate Director – Corporate Office (minutes)
Nick Crabb	Programme Director – Centre for Health Technology Evaluation
Mirella Marlow	Programme Director – Centre for Health Technology Evaluation (item 6.4)
Andy Mitchell	Associate Director – Information Architecture and Search – Evidence Resources (item 6.1)

Apologies (item 1)

1. Apologies were received from Carole Longson who was represented by Nick Crabb.

Freedom of Information and publication scheme (item 2)

2. The final minutes will be made available on the NICE website subject to the redaction of any exempt material.

Notes of the previous meeting (item 3)

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2017 were approved.

Matters arising (item 4)

4. All actions from the meeting held on 15 August were noted as complete or in hand.

Board meetings (item 5)

5. SMT reviewed the actions from the August Board Strategy meeting. It was agreed that Andrew Dillon would discuss with David Haslam the action regarding feedback on NICE's website. In particular, whether to initially send the survey to the Non-Executive Directors and then consider the scope for a wider distribution in light of this initial feedback.

ACTION: AD

6. SMT agreed the agenda items for the September public Board meeting.

The application of artificial intelligence in the work of NICE (item 6.1)

7. SMT considered the proposal to allocate non-recurrent funding to undertake a scoping exercise to explore the potential application of artificial intelligence (AI) to

NICE's guidance programmes. The scoping exercise would seek to identify and explore a small number of use cases for AI, which may include utilising AI for currently labour intensive tasks, and to reduce the time spent resolving uncertainty.

8. SMT discussed the proposal, noting potential synergies with other initiatives planned or underway both internally at NICE and externally. These include ongoing discussions between NICE and 'DeepMind', the proposed 'data lab' in Manchester, and Health Data Research UK – a multi-funder UK institute for health and biomedical informatics research. Following discussion it was agreed to assess whether these initiatives provide the opportunity to explore the scope for utilising AI in NICE's work, and not commission the scoping exercise at the present time.

Antimicrobial resistance (item 6.2)

9. Nick Crabb presented the proposed paper to the September Board meeting on a methods research project to explore a potential role for the technology appraisals programme in evaluating new antimicrobials with high potential for addressing unmet need. The paper also provides an update on NICE's other work-streams relating to antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
10. SMT discussed the research project, the issues to be evaluated when new antimicrobials are developed, and NICE's potential role in this evaluation, in particular given the likely need to develop new reimbursement approaches for such antimicrobials.
11. SMT agreed the report for submission to the Board, subject to the clarification of the next steps following the research project, and that at this stage, the report is for the Board's information.

ACTION: NC

Finance and resource report (item 6.3)

12. Ben Bennett presented the report that set out the financial position at 31 July 2017. The current year-end forecast is a £1.5m underspend, which includes assumptions about the potential additional cost of increasing capacity in the technology appraisals programme, and estimated expenditure on legal fees and the 'big data' project. The underspend is largely due to the level of vacant posts, with 70 whole time equivalent posts vacant in July, equating to a vacancy rate of 11%.
13. SMT discussed the reasons for these vacancies and the impact of the vacancy rate. It was noted that to date, the vacancy rate has not disrupted NICE's outputs. However, SMT were mindful of the potential impact of sustaining this level of vacancies over a longer time period. Challenges around the capacity for teams to engage in transformational projects and external initiatives were highlighted. The scope for funding this capacity was discussed, including through external bids, or utilising resources from unfilled posts.
14. Alexia Tonnel briefly noted a potential non-recurrent cost pressure in the Evidence Resources directorate to deliver longer-term savings.

ACTION: BB / AT

Update on retender of External Assessment Centre contracts (item 6.4)

15. Mirella Marlow presented the update on the proposed approach to procuring the External Assessment Centres (EACs) from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2021. The paper builds on an earlier SMT discussion in March, and provides the opportunity for SMT to scrutinise the proposals before the contracts are advertised via OJEU.
16. Mirella explained the proposed shift from a fixed fee contract to a framework contract. This will provide flexibility to cope with changing requirements for the work undertaken by the EACs and the uncertainty around the external landscape affecting the Centre for Health Technology Evaluation (CHTE). The proposed maximum expenditure over the three year period is £1.5m lower than that envisaged in the paper to SMT in March, and the £500k saving per year may increase if the call-off element is not fully utilised.
17. Mirella outlined the risks from the proposed approach, and the mitigating actions. The contractual arrangements will be more complex than at present. The scope to establish a dedicated post to oversee the contract, funded by the envisaged savings, is being explored.
18. In response to questions from SMT, Mirella clarified the proposed approach to finalising the contracts following the tender process. The balance between the fixed and call-off elements will take account of the number of suppliers selected and the amount of funding suppliers require to operate a core team for this work.
19. SMT agreed the proposals outlined in the paper and agreed to commence the tendering process with the contracts advertised via OJEU.

Annual equality report (item 6.5)

20. Ben Bennett presented the draft annual equality report, which subject to any comments from SMT, will be presented to the September Board meeting. The report, which follows the format used in previous years, has been developed in collaboration with the cross-Institute equality and diversity group.
21. SMT discussed the equality objectives and identified further actions to increase applications for advisory committee roles from people who describe themselves as from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups. These actions could include advertising the roles in areas with higher proportions of BAME residents, and engaging with groups that represent health and social care staff from BAME communities. It was agreed that further analysis should be added to the report on the equality objectives and other matters of note.
22. SMT noted the variation in the number of equality issues identified across guidance programmes. It was agreed that the cross-Institute equality and diversity group should consider whether this reflects the different nature of the guidance programmes or there is inconsistency in the equality impact assessment process. This referral to the group should be noted in the report.

ACTION: DC / FG

23. Subject to the above and other amendments, SMT agreed the report for submission to the Board.

ACTION: BB / DC

Strategy (item 7)

24. None.

Weekly staff SMT updates (item 8)

25. SMT agreed the staff updates.

ACTION: DC

Any other business (item 9)

26. SMT discussed a proposal from the London Social Committee for staff to bring their children to the London office for a social event at the end of a working day next week. Subject to a number of practical considerations to be resolved, SMT agreed the approach for an outdoor social event that would begin with the opportunity to visit the office.

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